MEN and MISSIONS

Men and Missions

By

TALCOTT WILLIAMS, LL.D.

Editor Philadelphia Press

An Address at the Annual
Meeting of the American Board,
Brooklyn, N. Y., October 15, 1908

THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS
BOSTON

DIMLY we all perceive that missions have ceased to be a matter of the individual call to convert souls in another land, such as stirred our earliest American missionary effort. Missions have passed beyond the efforts of any communion, much less any denomination, to establish its policy and enlarge its membership in new lands. Missions in our day, in our recent day, have passed from their individual and denominational period and entered on their national stage. They have become part of the great world forces with which every man, believer or not, must reckon. No man can put missions aside as negligible. The work of missions to-day affects the affairs of nations, the development of great peoples, the solution of racial problems. "Lord, turn and overturn," we have prayed for years; and at length, in this latter day, the earth shakes with the steps of His coming.

"Men and missions!" *The day has come, and now is, when it is more important for men that they should be interested in missions than that missions should interest men.* For us, in this American Board meeting, it is no longer a question whether the world is ready for missions, as when its members first gathered a century ago, but whether missions are ready for the world. . . .

When the church first began this great change thirty years ago — a change whose significance none of us understood — the first signs of this transformation came in the growth from a zeal for conversion to save men in the next world, to a new ardor and strong desire by widening education to save not converts alone, but peoples and nations, and prepare them for both worlds. Not one of us thirty years ago was wise enough to interpret aright this work of the Spirit, brooding over the church. We are wiser now. We all see that the hour has struck in the world's history when the emphasis and accent of missions have changed from the salvation of the individual to the redemption of nations. Our fathers and our grandsires looked out upon a lost world and thought of snatching from it here and there a brand plucked from the burning. We see, in the forefront of the coming dawn, the opportunity, the possibility, the certainty, of a redeemed humanity and a transfigured world, if we are equal to the duties of the hour. Those of my age will remember thirty or forty years ago, when this change in the emphasis of missions began to shift itself from seeking the conversion of the individual soul and saving him from a dire future, to the determination that nations should be converted, and the world as a whole should become part of the kingdom of God. We remember well the fear there was that this shifting of emphasis would cut, as some of us were told, "the pocket

nerve of missions." Has this come about? Were contributions ever larger? Were missions ever more in the thoughts of men? Did they ever bulk larger in the world's affairs?

I appeal to you all, after what you have just heard from this platform from our Northern neighbor, after what those of you know who come from the volunteer movement in our colleges, and those of you who are familiar with the wide foreign field, if it is not a fact that the work of missions, which was once a question of the planting of individual churches, is not instead now directed to the solution of great national issues; so that the racial question in Natal will never be settled except by the aid of the American missionary and on his principles; so that the future of the government of the Congo and the present changes have rested on the testimony of missionaries; and through India it is plain that unless education be placed upon the moral basis upon which missions place education, those who build the higher education of 300,000,000 have but sapped the foundations of order; for of no house is it so true that unless the Lord build the house they labor in vain who build it, as of the House of Knowledge. And so, the world around, judgment is uttered on the works of men by the work of missions.

Last of all, and most of all, how each of us in this Pentecostal year is stirred by the strange resurrection of the land of my birth

and my boyhood — the sudden presence among the free nations of the world of a free Turkey! Many causes have combined, many factors are present, many influences have turned the hearts of men through that empire; but if we ask ourselves what the governing and final factor is which has brought about the first of the world's bloodless revolutions, which has seen a people divided and dissevered by creed, by race, by language, by every conceivable difference which can separate the sons and daughters of men, suddenly act together — we do ill if we forget that for eighty years the American missionary, and most of all the missionaries of the American Board, have been laying the foundations and preaching the doctrine which make free government possible. Behold there those first two words: Liberty and Justice*, in the national colors of Turkey, but yesterday the colors of despotism, and to-day the bright colors of freedom and the constitutional law. Where do "Freedom and Justice" come from, except from the teaching of the American missionary?

For eighty years present in Turkey, our missionaries, men and women, who have taught in various schools and colleges, who have been called of their Lord to the work of missions in city and village, in road and field, have been dotted over Turkey — four, five, six, hundred; just as many, my friends in missions, as our contributions permitted

*The new Turkish motto: "Liberty, justice, and equality," hung in red and white at the side of the platform.

the Board to send — dotted over Turkey, daily the unconscious apostles of liberty and self-government. Myself a boy in a missionary's house — and I appeal to every missionary's son here from Turkey if he has not like memories? — I remember when, through long hot afternoons in Mosul, through rainy and foggy days in Mardin, through dark hours in the black city of Diarbekr, through days upon the mountain outlook of Harpoot, in village roadside khan and in the village Kehia's house, the perpetual question which arose in every conversation, and which was asked in every call by a Turkish official, by merchant and peasant, villager and townsman, by Armenian or Jacobite ecclesiastics, by newly found converts, by Moslems coming timidly to find the truth, was not merely in regard to the truth in Christ Jesus, but also concerning that marvel and miracle by which a nation existed without a king and ruled itself without despotism. Do you imagine that that has gone on for eighty years in every Turkish city, with every sermon and with all the teaching and training soaked and permeated with the spirit of American liberty and the love of American justice and the hatred of oppression, without gradually leavening the whole lump?

You will find scattered through diplomatic dispatches — sometimes even in our own — the suggestion that the missionary "makes trouble." When a man who loves justice and righteousness finds before him oppres-

sion and wrong it is his business to make trouble. He is there to plant the seeds which, when they grow, will make endless trouble and end the wrongs about him. Those seeds were planted in Turkey, and it came to pass, when the hour was struck and men found themselves face to face with liberty, that they were the first of earth's peoples in all western Europe and Asia who knew the difference between liberty and license. And that lesson they had learned from the missionaries of this Board. The leaders of new Turkey were the first who headed a revolution with the determination that there should be no period of riot betweeen the discharge of a sultan and the entrance of a constitution and a parliament. They had learned, from the historical lessons taught by American missionaries in college and school and still more in daily conversation, that it was possible for a great people to associate itself together for self-government and lose no single life in the attempt. . . .

And this amazing change and miracle in our latter days brings us face to face with the great fact which, as I have said, makes it more necessary that men should be interested in missions than that missions should be interesting to men; namely, that more than has been done in Turkey would have been done elsewhere if we had been equal to our opportunity. I ask those here — some of whom I remember well in college before they went out to fruitful years in Japan — what would have been the result if, half a

century ago, the Christian church had awakened to its opportunity as Japan opened? . . .

But in China the opportunity still remains. There is a great nation, comprising a quarter of the human race, at the very moment, as Turkey was seventy years ago, of passing from provincial government to an organized centralization; at the very instant and epoch in its fortunes where Japan was forty years ago, when Western knowledge first began to be accepted; at that very moment of leavening and of yeasting when nations are suddenly aware that their past has betrayed them and that they must look forward to a new future and a new learning. If we are wise in this present hour of our opportunity and follow what has been done and taught us by the recent past, then we shall fill China as Japan might have been filled forty years ago. Had it been we should not have had, as we have to-day, a nation which in science equals any of us, which in fighting-power surpasses all but one or two races, which handles with equal ease the battleship and the mine, the art and the literature of its past, and the warlike teaching of our own day, but which rests its national life on an ethics whose sum and teaching is in Bushido. I spoke of it with praise to a young man born of a mingled American and Japanese strain, aware of the traditions of both great nations from which he took his descent, and he said to me, this young man of nineteen or twenty, in words which I have not forgotten and which no one here will forget after I have

repeated them: "Bushido? I know you admire it in the West, but you do not seem to understand that there is nothing in Bushido which makes it necessary that a man should be truthful to men or true to a woman." Upon some such basis, resting on ethics which recognize all the wider and deeper relations of life but have not risen to the high-water mark of Christian ethics, that nation has founded its future, its growth, and its development.

"*Men and Missions?*" The question of the future is whether the men of the world shall be converted by missions to Christian ethics before nation after nation, after a period of unparalleled opportunity, has settled, as Japan has, upon the lees of its ancestors and found in ancient faiths its religious feeling and desire. This is the issue which must stir the heart of every man who looks out upon the field of missions; for the question of the future is whether the world is to move in one direction or another.

Now, let me suggest that this view neither minimizes the salvation of souls or forgets the chief work of missions. The Christian dispensation came in that fulness of time when Providence had made ready the Roman Empire and made forcible the great change from the narrow individualism of the synagogue to the broad humanity of the church. The way was prepared, and it is our duty to prepare a like way when nations are drawing together early to reach the truth, or to see it only after long wandering.

Now, as in the fourth century, the world of civilization which knows Christianity faces gathering changes without. Under Constantine, the Roman Empire still stood secure in all its boundaries. It lay safe, powerful, and at rest, from the wall of Severn to the walls of Dora; from the Rhine and Danube to the African Legion that looked from the southern passes of the Atlas on the Sahara and its swarming tribes. But without new dangers were seen, new perils had appeared to all the world of the Mediterranean, and for the first time in four centuries there were strange armies hanging on northern and southern boundaries equal to the defeat of the legion's ordered line. Nor less has our own day seen the first army outside of our Christian civilization equal to great victories and a valor greater than victories. I have no fear of the "Yellow Peril" marshaled by men who predict the coming shock of the East and the West. Of Asian birth, I know the East too well. But there are other perils in this day of free communication greater than those of war, and cutting deeper than the sword. Civilized the world will be; but is that civilization to be Christian or non-Christian, resting on faith and freedom or on tradition and authority?

Let us heed the solemn warning across the ages of the church of the fourth century. Imagine what would have been if the Nicene Council, when for the last time the garment of Christ was seen unrent and all Christen-

dom sat together, had done its duty, and, instead of disputing upon dogma and dividing on doctrine, had become a great missionary assembly, and felt upon miter and imperial circlet the Pentecostal flame. Suppose, only suppose, that the great council, whose supreme ability no student of history can doubt, had done its full missionary duty, and the northern and southern nations had been converted before, instead of after, the conquest of the Roman Empire. Suppose Arabia had known a missionary Christ before Mohammed, and that Saxon on the Elbe, and Frank beyond the Rhine, and Goth below the two rivers, had heard the Gospel in the fourth century instead of the sixth, seventh, and eighth. Is it not possible that a thousand years of wasted history, which have cast over more than three-quarters of the Christian church the cloud of superstition, would have been saved if the church of the fourth century had been a missionary church, looking without instead of within?

We stand at this moment on the threshold of a new era. When Christ in that last command, having begun by calling individuals by Galilee, on the Mount turned to his assembled church and told them, no longer speaking of individuals, to "teach all nations," He saw the nations of the world open to the new evangel. And we in like manner see all nations open; the possibility, if men do their duty by missions, that the church in this twentieth century shall do

what it failed to do in the fourth century, and shall convert, not individuals, but nations in the hour of their opportunity and before the hour of their power.

And if there be, as I do not think there can be, any doubt or question in our minds that this work can be done by missions, let us not forget that in our day the roll of martyrdom, long sealed, has been opened again, and that souls — that some of us knew as children, in whose families we have sat — have been added to that great multitude below the throne and the altar of God, crying, "O Lord, how long!" If there be any moment when we have given ear and heed to the gibe that there were rice Christians in China and paid Protestants in Turkey, let us remember that long roll of martyrdom; nor forget that while the primitive church in every century faced the question of great multitudes who had denied the faith and whose status had to be considered after each persecution, in this latter day the church of Christ has known so few who denied it that none of us think of the question which rent the early, primitive church. Instead, that roll of martyrs has been filled again and again by all who were gathered in a congregation. In two nations they have been assembled by thousands, and tens of thousands; and in this opening century, when Turkey is born in a day, when we see plainly the error we made in Japan, when China is open to the leaven of the gospel, when the future of India depends on Christian education and the problem of the

Dark Continent will only be solved by treating racial differences from the missionary and Christian standpoint, let us at least, men and women, make certain that that seed of the church corn, sown in this, our day, in suffering ignominy and death, shall grow in God's good providence, watered by our tears and contributions, until it shall shake like the cedars of Lebanon and the fruit thereof shall fill the whole earth.

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

Offices:
CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE, BOSTON
14 BEACON STREET

Cable Address, "Fernstalk, Boston"

Telephones:
Secretaries and Treasurer, 608 Haymarket
Publishing and Purchasing Department, 2181 Haymarket

President
SAMUEL B. CAPEN

Vice-President
REV. HENRY C. KING

Prudential Committee
THE PRESIDENT and VICE-PRESIDENT, *ex officiis*
CHARLES A. HOPKINS
REV. ARTHUR L. GILLETT
FRANCIS O. WINSLOW
REV. JOHN H. DENISON
REV. EDWARD M. NOYES
HERBERT A. WILDER
ARTHUR H. WELLMAN
REV. ALBERT PARKER FITCH
HENRY H. PROCTOR
REV. GEORGE A. HALL
ARTHUR PERRY
REV. LUCIUS H. THAYER

Secretaries for Correspondence
REV. JAMES L. BARTON REV. CORNELIUS H. PATTON

Recording Secretary
REV. HENRY A. STIMSON

Treasurer
FRANK H. WIGGIN

Secretary Emeritus
REV. ELNATHAN E. STRONG

Editorial Secretary
REV. WILLIAM E. STRONG

Assistant Secretary
REV. ENOCH F. BELL

Auditors
EDWIN H. BAKER WILLIAM B. PLUNKETT
HERBERT J. WELLS

Publishing and Purchasing Agent
JOHN G. HOSMER

District Secretaries
REV. CHARLES C. CREEGAN
287 Fourth Avenue, Room 818, New York City
REV. A. N. HITCHCOCK
153 La Salle Street, Chicago, Ill.
REV. H. MELVILLE TENNEY
Barker Block, Berkeley, Cal.